The Builder.

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THE daily papers have so fully recorded the events of the week spent in Paris, by the corporation of London and the persons who have been most intimately connected with the Great International Exhibition—the splendid hospitality of the municipality and the President, and the sham fight on the *Champ de Mars*, where, by the way, amusingly enough, 40,000 men under arms were not thought sufficient protection against the *blouses* who assembled on that occasion, so two or three additional regiments were ordered down,—that it is unnecessary for us to give any particulars. The little mistakes, too, made on the occasion; the strange disregard of men to whom the Exhibition owes much, and the want of some one unselfish and kindly spirit to bring persons together, and to make all feel that they were recognised, have not escaped comment, and doubtless will bring more. We were not amongst those who had cause for complaint, so listened quietly, and almost amused, to those who had, and we could tell some funny stories. We let these pass, however, and reserve our space for such observations on the buildings and matters that passed before us as the peculiar flurry of the occasion permitted us to make. Paris cannot be visited by any who have their eyes open without advantage. Its beautiful boulevards, spacious quays, noble public buildings, and the elegance and taste in decoration that everywhere prevail, extort the admiration of all, and give us a lesson of which we ought to take advantage. We have some grand things to set against these: we have good reason to be proud and thankful: but in many respects we are greatly behind the French, who, notwithstanding their present miserable condition, politically and morally, are assuredly a wonderful people.

Talleyrand used to say, "That sovereign has a little mind who seeks to go down to posterity by means of great public buildings. It is to confide to masons and bricklayers the task of History." Fortunately, however, for Paris, the rulers there have ever thought differently, and they have enriched the metropolis with structures of extraordinary magnificence and completeness. What one has begun the next has patiently finished; and the same desire is still exhibited. When we were in Paris, the Chamber of Representatives were discussing the propriety of voting fifty millions of francs for public works and improvements. We attended one of the sittings, by the way, and saw with astonishment the Babel-like confusion that prevailed. At one moment, a hundred members were speaking at once; the attendants were crying, "to your places gentlemen;" and the poor president was banging away at his bell, in a fruitless attempt to obtain order. To reduce wisdom and good government from such a chaos seemed impossible. The temporary house, although of very large size, appears well adapted for hearing in, having this advantage, it must be remembered, that the speeches are all delivered from the same place.

The completeness of which we have spoken is strikingly evident in their decorations. While the course pursued in London, is to omit as much as possible, in Paris the endeavour is to do everything that can be done. The suite of rooms in the *Hotel de Ville*, of enormous extent, affords an example: every inch of wall and ceiling sparkles with gold and colour, and the appearance of the whole, though the taste of parts may be questionable, is magnificent to the extreme. The effect of the great gallery here, when fitted up for the dinner which took place, was singularly brilliant. It is painted throughout, without any gilding; a series of Corinthian columns which surround the walls are white; lunettes formed in the ceiling above are filled with painted wreaths and vases, and the spandrils with children. The ceiling, formed into panels, is principally yellow and blue. In the arcade between the columns were yellow and white hangings: flags of all nations were suspended on either side, and countless wax-candles in chandeliers of brass and glass shed a brilliant light over the whole. Affluence of light is a main requisite for successful effect,—sometimes forgotten.* In the room that was fitted up as a theatre, the ceiling is a mass of gilding, relieved by green and maroon colour: and the pilasters on the walls have heads painted in the upper part of them, of great power and beauty.

As the Hotel de Ville is so close to the old *Cité* (an island in the Seine), we will step over the water to the *Sainte Chapelle* there, and the Cathedral of *Notre Dame*, where, in both cases, works have been going on for several years. At the *Sainte Chapelle* a million of francs (40,000*l.*) have been spent, we are told, and 20,000*l.* more will be wanted. The ancient glass here is of a delicious colour, and it has been well imitated in the restorations. The colourings of the side walls and columns are better than those of the vaultings. There are two curious circular detached staircases of wood, one on either side of the altar, which lead to a reliquary over it: and in the heads of an arcade around the walls are some ornaments formed in mastic on glass. The restoration of the lower chapel, the east end of which is of singular design, is not yet commenced. M. Lassus is the architect engaged.

At *Notre Dame*, M. Viollet le Duc is superintending the works. About 3½ millions of francs have been spent here, and it is estimated that, in the whole, ten millions will be wanted. It is not long since we gave some particulars of the proceedings here. The restoration of the west towers is going on; the bad stones are taken out and replaced with new, and others are scraped. A new Sacristy of considerable elegance, externally, has been built by M. Viollet le Duc on the south side of the east end of the Cathedral.

At the *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers* very extensive works are going on, and have been previously noticed by us. The style of building is Italian, but M. Vaudoyer, the architect, has chosen to erect the library as a detached building, in the Early English style: it is of stone, roofed with green and red tiles in patterns, and has an ecclesiastical appearance. Within it is divided into two aisles, by a central range of columns, and vaulted with stone. The windows are filled with stained glass, and the whole of the interior very elaborately painted. The walls are stone colour, the joints drawn in red; the columns are alternately slate colour and red; the vaulting is stone colour, powdered with *fleurs de lys* and stars, and the groinings are varied with red, brown, green, and slate-colour. There is a tribune at the side, painted and gilt, with stairs in the thickness of the wall,* and at one end of the apartment are some excellently painted figures, *en cire*, by M. Gerome, typifying the arts and sciences. The windows are on one side only, and blanks on the other side are painted in the same patterns and colours to correspond with the glass,—an arrangement we cannot admire. The floor is *parquetted*, with a wide border all round of small buff and black encaustic tiles.

Great improvements are observable in the streets by those who have not recently seen Paris: *trottoirs* are almost universal; the painted signs have nearly all disappeared; and the drainage is very different from what it used to be.

The largeness of the houses enforces the employment of an architect, and affords an opportunity for the display of ability. Land is very dear in Paris, and the result of course is, that all the houses are carried up very high. Not long ago a plot of land on the Boulevard was sold, and realized, at the rate of 160*l.* for every 36 feet superficial of the area: this, however, was probably a maximum price. There are at this moment, few private buildings going on.

In their executed works the French architects appear to hold fast to established styles, but there is a desire abroad, as here, to work out something new, and we give illustrations of one project of the kind, a design for a church,† by Mons. E. Nepveu, exhibited by that architect last year.

The building is of colossal dimensions, and has a preponderance of vertical lines carried out to great loftiness. With Mr. Nepveu's theory, which makes Classic architecture the architecture of *conformance*, and the Gothic, the architecture of *difformance*, we will not here meddle. All the vaultings were to be of cast-iron gilt, and there was to be an inner dome perforated in patterns to admit a view of the outer dome beyond. The organ is shown in a sunk chamber under the centre of the dome, and painting and sculpture were to be largely employed in the decoration of the structure.

Returning to the streets, most of the houses that have been built within the last five years display a considerable amount of external sculpture. In decoration, it will be observed that much greater use is made of statues and busts, though they may be but casts, than amongst us.

There are many pretty cast-iron canopies recently put up over doors: the cast ironwork generally, as our readers know, is very good.

The duration of external gilding in Paris, as compared with London, is very great, and affords evidence of the condition of our atmosphere,—a condition which we might, and ought to, materially improve by enforcing the combustion of smoke. The gilded lamp-posts

* The chandeliers, looked at singly, had no great claim for admiration; but when viewed altogether,—looking along the range on either side,—their sparkling brilliancy, caused by the glass amidst the metal, was extraordinary.

* Why are the small pillars forming the enclosure to these steps put out of upright?

† See page 509, in our present number.

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